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SUBJECT: ENERGY TOPICS HIGHLIGHT NEW ENGLAND GOVERNORS AND EASTERN CANADIAN PREMIERS ANNUAL MEETING

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¶1. SUMMARY: Political leaders from New England and Eastern Canada gathered in Saint John New Brunswick September 13-15 to discuss topics such as cross-border energy, the environment, opportunities within the green economy, trade and pandemic preparedness. Despite the geniality among the governors and premiers in this their 33rd annual meeting, a contentious issue between Maine and New Brunswick over proposed LNG plants caused some friction outside the meeting room. The State of Massachusetts will host the meeting next year, although the Governors and Premiers have not decided on a date or location in the state. END SUMMARY

¶2. The New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers (NEG/ECP) held their 33rd annual meeting in Saint John, New Brunswick, September 13-15. All five of the Premiers attended, joined by three of the six New England Governors (two of the governors sent representatives). Also in attendance were Canadian Consul General Neil LeBlanc of Boston and AmEmb Ottawa Economic Minister Counselor Eric Benjaminson although neither had an official role in the program. The theme of the meeting, co-chaired by New Brunswick Premier Shawn Graham and Maine Governor John Baldacci, was "Close Collaboration - Stronger Economies". Consistent with that theme, the agenda focused on topics that reflected the now traditional areas where the NEG/ECP have a long history of collaborative achievements: energy, the environment, opportunities in the new green economy, trade and a relatively new topic, pandemic preparedness. In all the leaders concluded their discussions by passing several resolutions on these topics. Complete texts of the documents are available online at: www.scics.gc.ca/confer09_e.html.

¶3. Notable highlights of the resolutions include:

--The Green Economy: Speakers from the private sector told the NEG/ECP of the significant opportunities in new technologies and clean energy which prompted the leaders to make a commitment to foster a transition to the green economy in their own jurisdictions. (FYI: The Governors and Premiers also made a favorable reference to President Obama's commitment to this same issue. END FYI)

--Renewable energy: The leaders resolved to urge their respective federal leaders to recognize hydroelectricity as a renewable energy source, a move especially welcomed by hydro power producers Quebec and Newfoundland-Labrador. Tied in with

the corresponding resolution on the green economy, the NEG/ECP also acknowledged that greenhouse gas reduction targets will spur opportunities for developing cost-effective, renewable energy resources.

--Climate Change: The NEG/ECP also highlighted the progress made by the cross-border Climate Change Steering Committee and especially how that was significant given the upcoming U.N. meeting on climate change in Copenhagen.

--Energy Efficiency: The Governors and Premiers called on their federal leaders to help promote and fund energy efficiency programs that address climate change, specifically mentioning the "cap and trade" system.

--Pandemic Preparedness: For the past 10 years the NEG/ECP has fostered mutual assistance among their respective jurisdictions in managing disasters and emergencies. The leaders pledged they would use this same cooperative resource in preparing for any widespread outbreaks of the H1N1 virus.

--Open and Secure Trade: The NEG/ECP resolved to promote open trade policies within the region, recognizing the importance of trade to their respective economies.

¶4. Responsibility for hosting the NEG/ECP meetings rotates among the jurisdictions, and next in line to play host for the 34th meeting in 2010 is the State of Massachusetts. However, the leaders have not decided on a specific place in Massachusetts or the date. (One of the factors is when New

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Brunswick Premier Shawn Graham will make his re-election bid which is predicted to be some time in 2010.

¶6. COMMENT: Although the governors and premiers were quick to praise their longstanding cooperative work in critical areas, behind the scenes there are inevitable issues that arise between jurisdictions as is the current case between New Brunswick and Maine. American investors want to build two liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminals on the Maine shores of Passamaquoddy Bay across from New Brunswick. Because of local opposition, the governments of New Brunswick and Canada oppose the projects, and Canada has also asserted that it can bar LNG tankers from transiting Canada's Head Harbor Passage, the only way to reach Passamaquoddy Bay. Maine is upset by these assertions, and as emphasized to Econ Min-Counselor by the Governor himself, is emphatic in wanting to see the plants get built because of the boost they would give to an economically depressed area of the state. Notwithstanding the strong rhetoric on both sides on this issue, it failed to overshadow the event or dampen the participants' enthusiasm. In all the NEG/ECP meeting once again lived up to its billing as an effective tool in cross-border relations. END COMMENT

¶7. This cable was coordinated with AmEmbassy Ottawa.
MILLMAN